

the English working classes at the time when he was writing, of the complaint of the unequal distribution of the national wealth amongst the nation, of the defects of the existing social system and the demand for political changes to remedy them. But though the phenomena which moved Carlyle to write *Chartism* and *Past and Present* were before his eyes, he underestimated their seriousness, and they did not shake his optimism. He perceived no flaws in the unrivalled prosperity of England. 'It is, in some sense, unreasonable and ungrateful in us to be constantly discontented with a condition which is constantly improving/'¹ So he describes the England of Charles II and compares it with the England of Queen Victoria, not only to interest his readers, but to impress upon them the lesson of content which he draws from the knowledge of the past.;

This tendency is one of the weaknesses of Macaulay.

Cotter Morison justly observes :

He was deficient in the true historic spirit, and often failed to regard the past from the really historical point of view. What is the historical point of view? Is it not this : to examine the growth of society in times bygone with a single eye for the stages of the process—to observe the evolution of one stage out of another previous stage—to watch the past as far as our means allow, as we watch

any other natural phenomena, with the sole
 object of
 recording them accurately? . . . Now what
 does Macaulay
 do in his observation of the past? *He*
compares it, to its
disparagement, with the present. The whole of
 his famous
 Third chapter, on the State of England, is one
 long paeon
 over the superiority of the nineteenth century
 to the seven-
 teenth century—as if an historian had the
 slightest concern
 with that. Whether we are better or worse
 than our ances-